



AETC News Clips

AFIT Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio



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Base realignment commission meets in Monterey

- By KIM CURTIS, Associated Press Writer
Tuesday, August 9, 2005

(08-09) 00:55 PDT MONTEREY, Calif (AP) –

The United States can't win a war on terror without help from the Defense Language Institute and the Naval Postgraduate School, California's politicians warned members of the Base Realignment and Closure commission.

Last month, both schools were added to a list of military bases around the country being proposed for closures and downsizings.

Sen. Barbara Boxer said closing or relocating the schools would be "extremely detrimental to our national security," and that it would take at least a dozen years to replicate DLI's infrastructure.

"We must win this war on terror," she said in a five-minute videotaped statement. "We do not have that much time on our side."

Members of the U.S. military learn foreign languages such as Arabic and Farsi, the national Iranian language, at the Defense Language Institute.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who also spoke via videotape, said the institutions are vital to defend the U.S. against potential attackers.

"The only way to prevent that harm is through intelligence and the ability to find them before they attack us," she said.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger also chimed in with a three-page letter to the commission, outlining why the military was well-suited to California.

"We have in this state the overall capability to provide all the support needed, from vast, unencroached training and test ranges and the ideal weather to use them, to outstanding technology and academic support," he said.

On July 19, both DLI and NPS were added to a list of bases proposed for closures, along with the Air Force Institute of Technology, or AFIT, in Ohio.

Anthony Principi, chairman of the BRAC Commission, has said the commission is considering merging both Monterey schools with AFIT, but keeping them in Monterey.

After listening to the testimony, Commissioner James Bilbray said he was very impressed by the schools, which he and other commissioners toured earlier Monday.

"I can't say what the commission is going to do, but I feel in the long run it's going to be fine for Monterey," he said to thunderous applause from the nearly 300 local residents at the hearing.

Other commissioners have said they would like to explore different locations, mainly to lower the cost of operating both schools.

Commissioner and retired Air Force Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton suggested moving the two schools to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

While Monterey City Manager Fred Meurer acknowledged a possible \$9 million a year savings for the government if the schools were moved to Ohio, he said the initiative move would be "cost prohibitive."

He also said dismantling, destroying and recreating DLI and NPS would be "dangerously disruptive."

Later this month, when the commission prepares its final list for the president, it will take the approval of seven BRAC commissioners to remove DLI and NPS from the list. President Bush has said he will accept the recommendations of the commission.

The Defense Language Institute, which was established in 1946, trains military linguists and is staffed by 1,200 primarily native speakers. The Naval Postgraduate School has about 1,500 students and has awarded defense-related master's and doctorates to military personnel since 1947.

DLI has been on the chopping block in past rounds of cuts, and the city of Monterey has lobbied hard to keep it.

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Officials say its faculty and staff would unlikely be willing to move with the school. A survey in 1993 after nearby Fort Ord closed found that 80 percent of instructors wouldn't leave the area. At its only West Coast hearing Monday, the commissioners also were slated to discuss possible base closures in Colorado and Alaska.

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Altus AFB, Okla.



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Altus man dead in motorcycle- car wreck

ALTUS — An Altus man died from injuries he received in a motorcycle-car wreck Friday night on Adams Street.

Carlos Ruiz, 45, suffered head injuries and was taken by Jackson County Medical Services personnel to Jackson County Memorial Hospital. He later was air evacuated to Comanche County Memorial Hospital in Lawton where he was pronounced dead.

Altus police say Ruiz was the driver of a Honda motorcycle which was east-bound on Adams Street. Officers also say Ruiz attempted to negotiate a right hand curve at excessive speed. The motorcycle struck a curb line, went airborne for 56 feet and then impacted the ground. It then went into a slide for approximately 33 feet before impacting a parked vehicle in the driveway of 1501 Adams.

Police say Ruiz was found unconscious and there was strong odor of an alcoholic beverage.

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Twins do double duty for USAF

Salem High School grads Dallas and Trevor Jones leave for U.S. Air Force basic training this month.

By Lindsey Wray
Roanoke Times
8 Aug 05

Dressing alike. Playing the same sport. Taking the same classes.

Twins Dallas and Trevor Jones have had similarities throughout their lives, and their post-high school plans are no exception. The Salem High School graduates both joined the U.S. Air Force and leave this month for basic training. Though their departure dates are two weeks apart -- Trevor left Aug. 2; Dallas will leave Aug. 16 -- the Salem twins will eventually be doing almost the same job.

Dallas and Trevor, 18, came to the Northwest Roanoke recruiting office with their mother in September. Barely a month into their senior year, they both chose to enlist in the Air Force because of the challenge.

This isn't the first parallel activity for the twins. When they were little, their mother used to dress them alike. In high school, they took several of the same classes and both wrestled for Salem. Trevor pointed out, however, that his brother uses a different bank than he does.

While growing up, the twins don't recall playing the typical prank of pretending to be each other.

"We didn't switch places in class or anything like that," Trevor said. In fact, Dallas said jokingly, Trevor's always been in his shadow.

The twins' sense of humor may help them tackle their jobs, which Air Force recruiter Scott Mitchell considers to be two of the most difficult ones in the Air Force. Dallas plans to be an airborne cryptologic linguist while Trevor will be a cryptologic linguist. They were able to choose these jobs because of their high scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, Mitchell said.

They will begin by spending six and a half weeks in basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio before heading to Monterey, Calif. for intensive language training, which could last anywhere from nine to 15 months. Because their Defense Language Aptitude Battery test scores were also above average, Mitchell said, the twins may be assigned to a more difficult language such as Czech, Greek or Arabic.

Dallas and Trevor may have an advantage to starting their lives as linguists -- they both took five years of Spanish in high school. Though they're not yet sure what language they'll be studying, the twins are hoping for Japanese or Russian. They'll later be able to use their language training courses toward associate's degrees.

They're uncertain what they'll do after they're out of the Air Force, but Dallas and Trevor are considering attending college or making a career out of the Air Force.

"We'll see how it works out," Dallas said. "I might do college or I might do the whole ride [with the Air Force]."

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Trevor said he looks forward to traveling for free and doesn't think he'll miss Salem. Neither twin said he was nervous about leaving; in fact, Dallas enjoys thinking about all the unknowns involved in the Air Force.

"It's kind of fun," he said.



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Seminar for hurt GIs outlines their options

By Sig Christenson
San Antonio Express-News
7 Aug 05

IRVING — Anesi "Maverick" Tuufuli talks of a glorious past in the lobby of an upscale hotel, the stump of his amputated left leg aching from all the walking he did the night before at a Texas Rangers game.

He once was "the legend," the fastest loader in his 1st Armored Division artillery battalion, able to fire two rounds in 45 seconds - half the time required by the Army - but has come to a weekend seminar in Dallas knowing this is a closed chapter of his young life.

Tuufuli, a big, easygoing father of two young girls, is at the crossroads but struggles to let go of the past and step into an uncertain future. It's easy to see why if you've been to war. The past is rooted in duty and danger, of brotherhood and dreams from two tours of Iraq broken by a terrible explosion; tomorrow is a blank slate devoid of beloved comrades.

There is resistance as his wife, Rhonda, nudges him forward, but also awareness that the time has come to move on. "Maybe there's a reason I'm here," says Tuufuli, a 28-year-old native of Pago Pago, American Samoa.

"Maybe there's a reason I've been given a second chance."

There's no doubt that Tuufuli and the 70 other soldiers and Marines in Dallas this weekend would go back to Iraq if they could, back to the desert, the omnipresent threat of insurgent ambushes, back to the men they led and served with and vowed to bring home.

As crazy as it sounds it's an easy choice, but the troops here are unlikely to return to combat or even stay in the service.

They've lost limbs, suffered terrible burns, been shot and are certain to carry the psychic wounds of war long after the surgeons at Brooke Army Medical Center perform their final operations. Only a precious few who suffer such wounds stay in the service. Everyone else opting not to jump through the hoops required to remain in uniform faces the even bigger hurdle of making life-altering decisions.

Those here are among the closest of BAMC's wounded to rejoining the civilian world, which is why many of them have been cloistered in a Marriott hotel. They're attending Salute to America's Heroes' Texas "Road to Recovery" conference.

It began Thursday with a baseball game, continued Saturday with a visit to Six Flags and concludes today(SUN, 8/7) with a nationally televised church service. But what they really came for was sandwiched in between, a series of seminars that aim to prepare the troops for their exit from military life.

These veterans are discovering the benefits they're due, like first dibs at government and federal contract jobs, and the Purple Heart license plate that gives them free airport parking. They're getting tips on how to find work, write resumes and prepare for job interviews.

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It's stuff many of them haven't thought much about as they've endured seemingly endless operations and rehabilitation sessions. But it's more than that. The Army gave these men and women structure. Now that structure is fading.

"They're scared," said 1st Sgt. Daryl Eddings, 44, of Dallas and the victim of an Iraqi jail riot that left him needing hip replacement surgery.

"Many of these folks wanted a career in the military," said Doug Plank, a 48-year-old Los Angeles businessman who is executive vice president of Salute America's Heroes. "In a split second their life was changed because of the wounds they received. They hadn't been anticipating a job transition."

Preparing them for the future is perhaps the biggest step yet. This time next year most if not all of them will have left the protective confines of BAMC, where they've lived with a tight-knit community of fellow wounded and been spared the stares of a public that hasn't faced the horrors of a long war in 32 years.

But getting a job is sometimes only half the home-front battle. Salute America's Heroes, founded last year by San Diego philanthropist Roger Chapin, has funneled money to seriously wounded veterans who have been threatened with foreclosures, evictions and cutoff notices from phone and power companies. It covers air travel for family members visiting loved ones at BAMC prior to surgeries and moving expenses in cases where troops face long rehabs. It's hopes to build six homes this year.

The Irving conference was the second for the group, which Plank said had a \$4 million budget last year, with \$9 of every \$10 going to veterans. It drew an alphabet soup of state and federal agencies, as well as the support organizations like the Military Order of the Purple Heart, to the Irving Marriott.

Tuufuli awoke Saturday after a night of fitful sleep caused by his aching stump. The bed was comfortable and he didn't initially want to go to the first round of seminars. No one ordered him to get moving. But he'd come with his wife and daughters Maselina, 1, and Kitana, 7 months old, curious about jobs he might land and certain it's time to press on.

The day opened with just what the doctor ordered - motivational speeches. Famed ex-Dallas Cowboy quarterback Roger Staubach told of how a 4-3 team of bickering players turned into Super Bowl champions after a dressing down from tight end Mike Ditka.

Folksy Rangers manager Buck Showalter talked of players who have Major League skills but whose biggest hurdles are in the mind, not the bat. They talked of unity, of watching the other guy's back. "I think the key in life is you just can't quit, you can't quit," Staubach said.

A video, "Hiring Heroes," outlined options. They learned of jobs offered by the Defense Department's "Always a Soldier" program. Information about a series of other state and federal programs followed, with a wounded Iraq veteran, Tracy Reep, 36, of Arlington, giving tips for crafting resumes, practicing for interviews and knowing how to dress for one.

"We have a lot of life ahead of us," said Reep, who lost part of his left hand and use of his left eye to shrapnel wounds. "A lot of us are young."

Starting over, though. Will not come easy for Tuufuli.

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A few weeks from now he'll mark his 10th anniversary in the Army. There, he was a leader and a lightning-fast loader. Officers at the National Training Center watched him feed two shells into an artillery piece in 45 seconds to ensure he wasn't taking any shortcuts.

The world was turned inside out during a Feb. 25 foot patrol in Taji. His men were learning the ropes from troops from the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood when there was an explosion. Three died, nine were wounded.

Sgt. Maverick Tuufuli lost his left leg above the knee and had shrapnel wounds to his arms, stomach and right leg. He wasn't the worst of the lot. One buddy lost both legs.

Today there's a swirl of emotions - anger at what happened, guilt over the sense that he's indulging in self-pity when others have suffered much more, including his friend on that patrol.

Then there's the guy who lost both eyes, and yet another soldier without legs. He ought to be happy to be alive but there's no escaping the images of his men, their voices and the promise he once made to them. "It seems like yesterday I was with my buddies, going out on patrols," Tuufuli said. "It's hard for me not to be over there with my guys. I made a promise then before we left. I even told one of my soldiers that passed away, I told his wife, 'I'll make sure I bring him home alive.'" These thoughts come in waves. There are other thoughts. The loss of his leg is a source of loathing, but seeing others worse off, oddly, helps. Robert "B.J." Jackson Jr. lost his legs Aug. 7, 2003 after shopping in Baghdad. A land mine detonated, a rocket-propelled grenade whooshed past and the GIs were caught in the crossfire of an ambush. Soldiers cut off his legs during the 4 1/2-hour firefight so they could free him from a Humvee.

As tough as it's been to endure, he's found inspiration in the fact that troops like J.R. Martinez, who was badly burned due to a land mine explosion, have battled back from even worse injuries.

"It's kind of a sick way to look at it, but that's what we do in the military," said Jackson, 24, of Des Moines, Iowa. "There are a lot of guys that aren't coming back, and there are a lot of families losing loved ones, and for some reason we were able to make it back." Like his wounded comrades, Tuufuli is thankful to be alive. Still, there are days he isn't motivated and Rhonda picks up on it.

It's the same old thing, he tells her.

Rhonda, a 28-year-old Independence, Mo., native, has his back. "I can tell when he's not motivated to get up and work at his therapy," she said. "He said things like he just wishes he'd go back to the way his body looked before and all the things he could do before, and I always tell him he can be the same person again, he just has to work harder at it."